

Habitat Features:

Total Site: 1,000 acres

Size of Primary Habitat: 522 acres (Durham County section)

Habitat Heterogeneity: High: includes mature bottomland hardwoods, open fields and steep bluffs; beaver impoundments, marshes and sedge meadows are also well-developed.

Forest Structural Diversity: Good: Big Oak Woods has all strata well-developed; shrubs, vines, understory and canopy are also well-developed in the Gamelands south of Mason Farm; thickets of privet and cane are found throughout the Gamelands.

Water Sources: Morgan Creek is a perennial stream; swamps, floodplain pools and beaver ponds also provide year-round water.

Amphibian Breeding Sites: Several vernal pools on the Mason Farm tract support large breeding populations of *Ambystomas*; flooded fields and drainage ditches are used by several species of frogs throughout the year.

Denning Sites: Large logs, dense thickets, steep wooded slopes all provide denning sites.

Big Trees/Large Cavities: Numerous, especially in the old-growth portions of the Big Oak Woods

Snags and Logs: Numerous

Mast-producing Species: The Big Oak Woods contains a high diversity of oaks and hickories; elms, maples, ashes and hackberries provide abundant soft mast.

Nectar Sources: Old field habitat at Mason Farm supports a high diversity of nectar-producing wildflowers throughout the growing season; buttonbush is a fairly widespread nectar plant in the Gamelands.

Landscape Features:

Refuge Shape: Oblong, following contours of floodplain

Refuge Integrity/Fragmentation: Integrity is extremely high; no roads, sewerlines, powerlines occur from Mason Farm south to the Chatham County line; although dirt roads are present on the Mason Farm tract, vehicular access is limited to University researchers and grounds staff.

Proximity to Other Refuges/Existence of Corridors: Downstream, this site is contiguous with the broad area of gamelands that extends around the northern margin of Jordan Lake; only the bridge at Farrington Road in Chatham County breaks this continuity (the bridge is supported on piers but the slopes are covered in rip-rap). Upstream, the site is contiguous with property owned by the NC Botanical Garden. A large undeveloped ridge borders the Mason Farm Preserve on the west; the southern portion of this ridge is undergoing development, and the remainder may be developed in the near future.